

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 L-03 HA-05 TRSE-00 DOTE-00
AID-05 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02
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DRAFTED BY NEA/ARP:FHGERLACH:MAR
APPROVED BY NEA: NVELIOTES
E:EJOHNSTON (DRAFT)
L/NEA:MPEAY
D/HA:EJONES
L/HR:LBAUMANN
TREAS:B.PALMER (DRAFT) AND
DOT:R. BROWN (DRAFT)
B. POUNDS (DRAFT)
D:DLAMB

-----022239 100811Z /15

R 092323Z AUG 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
INFO USLO RIYADH

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 201933

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, EAID, ETRN, SA

SUBJECT ERBAL STATEMENT TO SAG ON SEX DISCRIMINATION

REF: ISW 1192 (282150Z JULY 78)

1. THE DEPARTMENT HAS APPROVED THE TRANSPORTATION
COOPERATION AGREEMENT AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL TO FURTHER
OBJECTIVES OF JOINT ECONOMIC COMMISSION. DURING APPROVAL
PROCESS, IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT BUS SYSTEM, WHICH IS A
PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF PROJECT AGREEMENT, MIGHT INVOLVE
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SEGREGATED SEATING BY SEX AND DENIAL TO FEMALES OF PERMIS-
SION TO DRIVE VEHICLES. THE DEPARTMENT HAS EXAMINED THIS
QUESTION IN LIGHT OF POLICY DIRECTIVE ENUNCIATED IN SECTION
502B(A)(1) OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1961 AS AMENDED, TO
"PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE INCREASED RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS FOR ALL WITHOUT DISTINCTION AS TO
RACE, SEX, LANGUAGE OR RELIGION". DEPARTMENT HAS DETER-

MINED THAT SINCE JEC PROJECTS ARE ENTIRELY REIMBURSABLE THERE IS NO LEGAL BAR TO OUR PARTICIPATING IN PROJECT AND THAT THERE ARE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF PROJECT, INCLUDING FACT IT MIGHT INCREASE MOBILITY OF WOMEN.

2. IN APPROVING PROJECT AGREEMENT, THE DEPUTY SECRETARY AUTHORIZED THAT EMBASSY JIDDA DISCUSS WITH THE

SAG, AT SUCH TIME AND WITH SUCH SAG OFFICIAL AS EMBASSY DEEMS MOST APPROPRIATE AND EFFECTIVE, (I) THE OBLIGATION OF US AGENCIES TO GIVE EFFECT TO US HUMAN RIGHTS LAWS AND POLICIES; (II) USG COMMENDATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE SAG FOR THE PROGRESS IT HAS MADE IN THIS AREA; (III) THE ISSUE OF THE EVOLVING STATUS OF WOMEN IN SAUDI ARABIA.

3. FOLLOWING ARE SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS:

--USG HAS ALWAYS SOUGHT THE BEST POSSIBLE RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA. WE WANT TO COOPERATE IN EVERY APPROPRIATE WAY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SAUDI ARABIA.

--THERE ARE TIMES WHEN SUCH COOPERATION IS COMPLICATED BY DIFFERENCES IN OUR RESPECTIVE SOCIAL VIEWS ON SUCH QUESTIONS AS THE STATUS OF WOMEN.

--THIS PARTICULAR QUESTION WAS RAISED IN WASHINGTON IN CONFIDENTIAL

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THE PROCESS OF CONSIDERING A JOINT ECONOMIC COMMISSION AGREEMENT IN THE TRANSPORTATION FIELD. IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT SAG MIGHT DECIDE TO SEGREGATE SEATING ON PUBLIC BUSES BY SEX AND FURTHER THAT WOMEN WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO DRIVE THEM.

--WE RECOGNIZED THAT PROJECT HAS POSITIVE ASPECTS, NOTABLY THE FACT THAT IT MIGHT INCREASE MOBILITY OF WOMEN. AT THE SAME TIME, THE BROADER QUESTION OF STATUS OF WOMEN REMAINS ONE OF ONGOING CONCERN. WE NOTE FOR INSTANCE THE CURRENT EFFORT TO PREVENT WOMEN FROM WORKING IN THE KINGDOM WITHOUT WORK PERMITS.

--OUR CONCERN STEMS FROM POLICY DIRECTIVE CONTAINED IN FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT TO "PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE INCREASED RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS FOR ALL WITHOUT DISTINCTION AS TO RACE, SEX, LANGUAGE OR RELIGION".

--WE REALIZE THAT SAG HAS MADE COMMENDABLE PROGRESS IN AREA OF HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL OPPOR-

TUNITIES FOR WOMEN. WE FURTHER REALIZE THAT PREVAILING SAUDI VIEW OF PROPER ROLE FOR WOMEN DIFFERS FROM US VIEW AND THAT THESE VIEWS REQUIRE SENSITIVE UNDERSTANDING ON PART OF BOTH SOCIETIES. WE APPRECIATE IN THIS RESPECT THE TOLERANCE WITH WHICH SAUDI ARABIA HAS REACTED TO WESTERNERS IN KINGDOM.

--U.S. IS MOTIVATED BY TWO PRINCIPAL CONCERNS. FIRST, THERE ARE U.S. ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAWS WHICH APPLY TO U.S. DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS SUCH AS IN THE FMS AND JEC CONTEXTS. SECOND, WE FEEL IT HAS BEEN IN OUR MUTUAL INTEREST TO BUILD POSITIVE PUBLIC IMAGE OF SAUDI ARABIA IN U.S. WE NOTE WITH PLEASURE RECENT SAUDI SUCCESSES IN THIS REGARD AND WOULD REGARD
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IT AS MOST UNFORTUNATE IF THIS ATMOSPHERE WERE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY REACTION TO SAUDI HANDLING OF SUCH SOCIAL ISSUES AS WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

--WE ARE NOT TRYING TO IMPOSE OUR VIEWS ON SAUDI ARABIA. RATHER, WE OFFER THESE VIEWS IN THE SAME SPIRIT OF CLOSE FRIENDSHIP WHICH HAS LONG BEEN CHARACTERISTIC OF OUR RELATIONS. WE WANT TO WORK CLOSELY WITH THE SAG TO ASSURE THAT POTENTIAL PROBLEMS OF THIS NATURE ARE HANDLED IN A WAY THAT AVOIDS UNNECESSARY IRRITANTS TO OUR RELATIONSHIP.

4. EMBASSY REQUESTED TO KEEP DEPARTMENT APPRISED OF ANY SEXUALLY DISCRIMINATORY ASPECTS THAT MAY DEVELOP IN TRANSNET PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION. VANCE

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